



TRANSLATION.

TO THE HON. MR. LANGEVIN, C. B.,
Minister of Public Works.

SIR,

I exceedingly regret not to be able to defer my departure for my missions. I should have been very glad to have had an opportunity of meeting several of the honorable members of the Government; but unfortunately they are absent, and the advanced season does not admit of my staying. I will say then to you, Sir, what I would say to all, and if you will kindly be my interpreter to the other ministers, I shall be very grateful. Much is said of civilizing the Indians, of rendering them capable of living by their labour, and so to save them from the destruction with which they are threatened. The Government, with that object, makes efforts which do it honour; but while applauding it for these generous efforts I have the sad conviction that they will not have the result that is expected. To desire to make colonists of adult Indians is absolutely labour in vain. How, said an Indian Chief to me, can you expect us to cultivate the earth, we who have never had in our hands but a gun or an arrow? If you wish us not to die, give us fathers and brothers who shall show our children how to build houses and cultivate the land, as do the whites. In effect, the Indian, although he lives one might say by misery and privations, is incapable of withstanding the labor required for the culture of land, if he has not been trained to it from infancy. Habituated as he is to live by the chances of the chase and the rod, it will be very difficult, not to say impossible, to

induce him to lay by a portion of his crops, even should he harvest enough, to sow his lands the following year. Perhaps in building houses for the Indians, providing accommodation for their animals, putting at their head missionaries whom they like, capable of directing their works while labouring with them,—who would put by each year in reserve the seed required for the succeeding year,—perhaps, thus, some results would be obtained. I say perhaps, because the means have always been wanting to enable me to try this plan. However, if it is a question of civilizing the Indians by means of little children, I will not say “perhaps”—on that point my mind is fixed, having made the experiment.

I allow myself to attach to this a letter I formerly addressed to a lady unhappily without fortune, but rich in heart and good will, and who would have been very glad to have helped me. This letter was not written to be placed before the honourable members of the Government, and will all the better make plain my naked thoughts on the subject of the Indians. I am convinced that the only efficacious means of saving the Indians of the North-west from destruction, and of civilizing them, is by commencing with the young children. All expenditure made in other ways with this object will be almost pure loss. No doubt schools will do good, but the young Indian, while with his family, will never frequent them regularly; and if, notwithstanding that, he learns to read and write, he will none the less live as did his father, by the rod and the chase only; he will remain savage. To civilize him it is necessary to take him, with the consent of his relatives, and make him one of us; it is necessary to provide for him a new home, to accustom him to a kind of life quite distinct from that of his relations; it is essential, moreover, as much as possible, to make him forget the usages, habits and language of his ancestors. Those adopting him should not only keep him in their charge until the age of 12 or 13—he would be subject at that period too much to Indian influences—he should be taken care of until his marriage. It is to Indians thus trained

that the government can with advantage offer farm stock, and the implements necessary for the tilling of land. That would be a very proper way of helping them. I state, with the consent of those interested, that these poor savages desire nothing so much as the happiness of their children—they quite foresee the future which awaits them, and they often beg that we will take them, and prepare for them a more promising future, but we are obliged to refuse to receive them for lack of means. When we take them it is with the express condition that we shall have control of them until their marriage, or at least until they have arrived at a fit age to marry. In three different establishments in my diocese we are bringing up 100 children, and I can say that we are not meeting the expenditure that this work entails, except by imposing on ourselves privations; but at least we have succeeded in proving that the civilization of Indians through their children is possible. It would not be proper for me to render testimony to the efforts we have made, but this work has not been done in secret. Messieurs the members of the government, M.M. the officers of the Hudson Bay Co., travellers of all nations and every religious denomination, who have visited our establishments, have been able to ascertain themselves the result of our efforts. I may cite amongst other witnesses, His Excellency Lord Dufferin. He did not visit our North-west establishments himself, but he and his suite visited the St. Boniface Orphanage, where the Indians were very numerous. So that full information on the subject can be had from persons capable of bringing a sound judgment to bear upon it. At a place of 100 children, whom we are educating, we could take 1,000 or more, we could marry each year a good number of young Indians, who, doubtless, would not be such industrious settlers as those emigration brings us, but who would cede to no one in probity and fidelity to the Government.

I would wish, then, to-enlarge our three establishments, and create at least three or four others, so that Indians from all parts may experience less difficulty in placing their children with us.

We have made a trial to see if we should succeed. Let the Government inform itself as to the results obtained; if it is not satisfied from them, let it also make a trial; let it pay, for instance, at least half the cost of board, &c., say \$40 a year, for a certain number of children that it may confide to us at the age of five years. I ask nothing after they have reached 15 years of age; it (the Government) might put aside the cost of the keep of these children [after that age], and give the money to them on their marriage, and so assist them to get on to a little farm. If this experiment satisfies the Government, it should continue and enlarge the work; if not, renounce it.

I venture to suggest another plan, having for its object rather to save from destruction than to civilize—at least, immediately—those of the Indians who inhabit the North-west lands not susceptible of colonization. These Indians, beset as they are by traders of all sorts, hunt and destroy everything in their country in order to supply the traders not only with furs, but also with provisions. The result is, the land is greatly impoverished, and it is also the cause of the Indians suffering from hunger, and will end by their disappearing. I am therefore convinced that it would be rendering a true service to these poor Indians only to allow trading to be carried on by a single company under the control of the Government. This would also be a powerful remedy against the immorality that this multitude of strangers cannot fail to bring with it. This company having authority, to the exclusion of all others, would evidently make large profits, and it would be just that the Indians should profit a little by them. Besides a reasonable payment for their furs, it would be necessary that this company should maintain in each district at least one establishment, where orphans, the aged, infirm, idiots and the sick, could be received and charitably and intelligently cared for. The life of the poor Indian is a very sad one, but that of the aged and sick, and generally of those who are not able to help themselves, is most deplorable, and could not be more wretched. One might say that the savage dies rather from want of care than from sick-

ness. In almost every mission we rescue some of these poor abandoned ones, but what we do only serves to fill us with sorrow that we are not able to accomplish more. Is it not just that those who enrich themselves at the expense of the Indians should be compelled to come to their assistance? A company, under a *wise and just control*, having no competition to fear, might be able to prevent the total destruction of the animals of the country, those at least on which the Indians subsist.

Here, Sir, are the means which seem to me efficacious not only to civilize, but to save from destruction, the poor Indians of the North-west. It is not a question of religion—although for us religion is a means absolutely essential for their civilization. It is a question of saving the Indians, of receiving these little unsavoury (*dégoutants*) beings into our family. For this, however, such abnegation—such a contempt for all the enjoyments of life, and of oneself is required that one cannot reasonably expect this self-denial of persons obliged to provide for the wants of a family. I pray your honorable governments to reflect on this,—that they simply and solely desire the well being of the Indians—that these Indians themselves love what is good when they can distinguish it;—and your governments will not be far from thinking as I do.

While begging you, Sir, to excuse this too lengthy letter which I am not able to write so carefully as I could wish, I pray you to kindly take in hand the interests of these poor Indians, and if gratitude is not their virtue, I can assure you that I regard as done to myself the good that it may be thought fit to do for them.

Believe, Sir, and Hon. Ministers who kindly join you in this benevolent object, in my respect and gratitude.

(Signed,)

† VITAL I.

Bishop of St. Albert,

O. M. I.

Ottawa, 4th September, 1879.

TRANSLATION.

PORTMAIN, 17 January, 1878.

MADAM,

You have been good enough to ask me for information respecting my missions, thinking you might make use of it and procure for me, by this means, from your acquaintance and friends, aid for this work. I will not confine myself entirely to speaking to you of our missions. I desire only to draw your attention, and that of your friends, to a Work which I regard as very important, and which I venture to recommend earnestly to your zeal and charity.

After having passed nearly twenty-three years of my life amongst the Indians in the English possessions of North America, now annexed to Canada, I have been able to satisfy myself that our poor Indians can be made good Christians, but that we can only succeed in civilising them sufficiently to make of them good citizens, by taking charge of them when quite young children. We are acquainted with Indians, of different races, adopted in infancy by half-breed (Metis) families, who are quite civilised—equally so as the Metis, who have brought them up. For the last twelve or fifteen years especially, thanks to the intelligent and devoted zeal of the good Sisters of Charity of Montreal, who lend us their powerful aid, we have taken and brought up in different establishments, a certain number of small Indian children, of whom many write and speak tolerably well, French and English. All are habituated to civilised life, and the existence of the savage has become no longer possible for them. The Canadian Government, which seems to have at heart the civilisation

of the savage, has kindly promulgated a law which is of great assistance to us in this important work; it gives to whoever adopts an abandoned child, a father's right over this infant, so that these children do not leave us at the age of eight to eleven, as frequently happened previously. Wretched relations, who wished to profit by these children thus trained, persuaded them that they were slaves with us, that they would be better fed and, above all, freer on the plains and in the forests. The child allowed himself to be enticed away; he learnt quickly the mistake he had made, but they continued to make him believe that if he returned he would be severely punished; the little deserter shunned us, became a savage again, and our expenditure and trouble were almost entirely thrown away. The Government has much facilitated our work by passing this law, but it is necessary, further, that they should give to the missionaries who are able thus to charge themselves with the education of these little children, certain funds for the increasing of the number of these establishments, and for the reclaiming of large numbers of these poor Indians. They would have nothing of the savage (so placed), in their morals or manners, and in this way the Indians would disappear as savages—but they would not die out. Already we are able to marry those we have brought up with the Metis, and, occasionally, even with civilised strangers; we make good farmers of them, excellent citizens, as civilised as a good number of the farmers and peasants of Europe. The missionaries have only been able to carry on this important work on a small scale; up to the present it has only been, so to speak, an essay. They have only been able to apply a portion of the alms given for the Propagation of the Faith, and they have not been able to carry on these two works simultaneously, except in a small way, and by their economies, their labours, and, I may say, their privations. They have had to refuse to take little children who had relatives, and, even among the orphans, they have had to choose the most unfortunate—those who were exposed to almost certain death. For example:—A little boy, of the Blackfeet tribe, buried alive

with his dead mother, and saved by the greatest chance; another little boy, of the Cree tribe, who, after having lost his father and mother, was found alone, abandoned, near the corpse of his father; seeing the dogs devour it, he ran away terrified; he lived many days in the woods, eating wild fruits, and passed several nights in this way during the cold autumn season; at last he was discovered by an Indian and brought to the missionary. Is it necessary to cite the case of a young girl of the same tribe, whom a miserable heathen wished to devour to appease his hunger! We have taken by preference little cripples, the blind, lame and idiots, who probably would not have lived had it not been for the missionary; we have thus the consolation of having saved their lives, but we have not also that of giving to society civilized children—they remain always on our hands, a charge on our establishments, and making it impossible to replace them. For this important work—the education of the savage—money is necessary, but above all devotion and abnegation. This Christianizing and civilizing work, as it can only be carried out by members of a religious body [having no family ties], and consequently by Catholic missionaries, many rich persons, otherwise well disposed, will not have any connection with it. Our Government, which professes not to favour any religious denomination, as such, has, no doubt for this reason, up to the present refused to assist in our work, at least, by furnishing us with money. It is quite willing to assist us in the matter of Indian schools, but it is not with the modest salary of a teacher that we can build numerous and vast establishments, which in order to be complete, should be double; it is necessary that the sexes should be separate, and that the boys should be under the direction and supervision of priests or brothers, while the little girls should be under the absolute direction of the sisters. It would be almost necessary even to have a third establishment, where idiotic and crippled children should go when they are of maturer age. They are then often more troublesome than when they are small, and the impossibility later on of placing them in a position, makes

them very disagreeable towards the other children, and often dangerous. But I would console myself for not having the third establishment if I could obtain the two others in accordance with our requirements. So that, to take Indian children, of tender age, civilize them by a Christian life, make good citizens of them, able to live honestly by their labour—is a work that every one should find important and good. This work is possible, for we have tried it and succeeded. I do not speak here of the Orphanage of the St. Boniface Arch-diocese, and of the Mackenzie Vicariate—I am not commissioned to do so; let inquiry be made, if desired, of the employés of the Hon. Hudson's Bay Co., of English, Canadian and American travellers, who have been able to visit our establishments at St. Albert, Lac de la Biche, and Ile à la Crosse, and they will learn from these gentlemen of different religious opinions, whether we have succeeded or not. But still I say, once more, what we have done is only an essay; to obtain a real benefit, this work must be done on a large scale.

The Congrégation of Oblâts de Marie Immaculée will furnish me for this purpose with Priests and Brothers. The Sisters of Charity, called the Grey Nuns of Montreal, will supply me with Sisters. These Priests, these Brothers and Sisters, would forsake, for the success of the Work, their family, their country, and, one might say, every hope of enjoyment of the world and of life; they will not recede before any sacrifice, they will devote themselves to these little savages, who nevertheless have nothing to win the affection;—I mistake—they have their misery, and they are the price of the blood of a God. It is certainly more than is required to make them love the poor devotees of religion who have left all to follow Jesus Christ. Moreover, for this work I can find the men and women necessary if the Congregations who obtain them for me, at present, could not furnish me with them in sufficient number. Other religious institutions would be happy to come to our assistance so soon as they had the means of doing good. I can therefore find men and delicate young women who will give themselves with pleasure, and

expend their strength and their life for this eminently christian and civilizing work, but it is much more difficult for me to find persons who are willing—not to give me, but even to open for me, their purse. I should remark, however, that I have found in this connection happy exceptions—examples of the most touching charity. If it were necessary to found in France or England, or in any town of Canada or the United States, a work of this character, we should not be wanting the means; rich people are yet easily to be found who give generously for a work in their own country—for alleviating miseries of which they are eye witnesses. But who will give thought to the poor savages of the English American possessions of the North-west? If one traverses the immense plains of the North-west, one will find in all the Indian camps, or in places where they are in the habit of frequenting, strangers of various origins living with them sometimes in very questionable intimacy—living even *en famille* with them—during the time they are in the country; when they go they leave behind them for our orphanages little children wild as their mothers.—God grant that it may be possible for us to take all these little ones and give them that education, that civilization, of which their fathers are proud! I trust they would make better use of it than their fathers! Yes, I repeat, there are strangers who think of the Indians, but it is to enrich themselves at their expense; they teach them by their example to lie and cheat, insomuch that the most immoral Indians, and those the most difficult to reclaim and civilize, are those who are tutored in this way by strangers. Yet are we happy that the commerce in intoxicating drinks has been put a stop to by the Government. The work of the Propagation of the Faith procures for us, as much as it can, the means of announcing the gospel to the heathen—that of St. Enfantin assists us under the same conditions to take charge of and educate these little ones; but yet again I would say this work should be taken up on a large scale, and we have not been able to do that hitherto, and cannot do it with the alms alone that we receive from these admirable associations. If I

spoke English more readily I would not hesitate to travel through England, Ireland and Scotland, and a portion of the United States and Canada, in order to awaken an interest in this work of the civilization of Indians through their young children. I would address myself, by preference, to the inhabitants of this country, because I regard them as more under obligations to do something for the Indians who live in their country. I would address especially Catholics, on whose sympathy I think I am more warranted in counting. Experience, however, has shown me, that I can reckon as much on the generosity of our brothers who do not participate in our religious convictions. There are Protestants, especially, who have visited our establishments, and I could mention a number who have shown themselves truly generous. I venture to name His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor Morris, who has been kind enough to adopt a little Indian girl. She bears his name, and, thanks to his charity, she has ceased to be a savage. She will, I hope, be a wife and a Christian mother, who will do honour to her generous protector and to those who will have educated her. How many rich, of all creeds, might obtain for themselves the same honour and the same credit! With the difficulties that we experience in procuring the necessaries of life in this inhospitable country, each child costs not less than \$80 (400*f.*) each year. How many might either themselves, or by associating themselves with others, adopt a child at this cost, and so extend the reign of God and of civilisation! The greater number may not be able to help this work very considerably—let them give at least their mite, and these small contributions, added together, may, as they have in the Propagation of the Faith, have great results. Is there a young woman in the boarding schools, or a young man at college, who could not economise in her or his expenditures on trifling gratifications, the sum of \$1 (5*s.*) each year? And if such an example could be extended, what could not be the happy results?

Some years ago, while crossing the ocean, I had an oppor-

tunity of conversing with my fellow voyagers on the subject of my favorite Work. A noble American, formerly Governor of one of the States of the Union, while speaking to the others present, gave utterance to a beautiful remark that I shall never forget: "I do not hold the religious convictions of Monseigneur, *but I love what is good wherever I see it.* We cannot deny "that this is an eminently civilizing and religious work. We "cannot consequently be indifferent to it." Then taking his hat he went round the saloon himself and placed in my hands 600 fcs. which he received from the passengers of various nationalities and religious convictions.

At St. Albert I have often been visited by Protestant ministers, with whom I find myself in open opposition, since our doctrine is not the same; they none the less gave me a very precious contribution from themselves for my little Indians. They also, without doubt, "love what is good wherever they find it."

If, as you say, Madame, you can through your friends, make my plans known, and interest in them persons in a position to aid me in realising them, I shall be for ever grateful to you. You could remit the contributions they are kind enough to give, to the R. R. P. P. Oblats. They have establishments in France, England, the United States and Canada.

All these Missionaries, my brothers in religion, would be happy to procure for me thus the means of doing good, in sending me the remittances destined for my hands.

Excuse, Madame, the length of this letter, which is nevertheless very incomplete.

And believe me

Your respectful servant in J. C. & M. I.,

† VITAL I., ÉVÊQUE DE ST. ALBERT,

O. M. I.

(Bishop Vital Grandin)

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